

June 2010

Consular Fees

Questions and Answers

OVERVIEW

The changes in consular fees, which come into effect on July 13, 2010, will cover actual operating expenses for our network of 301 consular posts abroad, 23 domestic passport agencies, and other centers that provide consular services to both U.S. and foreign citizens. As is the case in all U.S. government user charges, the result is that those services of direct benefit to individuals, organizations, or groups are paid for by the users rather than by taxpayers in general.

In response to the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), the Department has undertaken a systematic expansion of the network to provide better service to communities that have been particularly affected by the land border crossing requirements associated with that program. By the end of FY 2011, we will have 23 passport agencies and five passport centers, two of which are dedicated to the printing of passport books and passport cards.

Fees for passport books also cover the costs of certain emergency services provided to U.S. citizens overseas, including assistance to U.S. citizens who have been victims of crime, assistance provided after the death of a U.S. citizen, and visits to U.S. citizens in overseas prisons. These services also include organizing the evacuation of U.S. citizens affected by war or natural disaster in a foreign country, such as victims of the recent earthquake in Haiti. The estimated cost of providing such services to U.S. citizens in Fiscal Year 2009 was almost 300 million dollars.

Why have some fees increased more than others?

The cost of service study completed in June 2009 is the most detailed and exhaustive one the Department of State has ever conducted. It gives us greater clarity into our actual costs and allows us to differentiate better between specific services. As a result, we are establishing tiered fees for some service categories, charging more for cases that require extensive processing and less for more

straightforward cases, better reflecting the cost of providing these services.

Have some fees decreased?

Yes. The fee for determining returning resident status of a U.S. lawful permanent resident has decreased from \$400 to \$380 because of improvements in automated systems improving that service. Also, while the immigrant visa application processing fee for employment-based applications has increased from \$355 to \$720, the fees for immediate relative and family preference applications have decreased from \$355 to \$330, and the processing for all other immigrant visa classes has decreased from \$355 to \$305.

How much will a passport application now cost?

The total charge for a first-time passport book for an adult, including the application fee, security surcharge and execution fee, will increase from \$100 to \$135. The total charge for an adult passport book renewal, including the application fee and security surcharge, will increase from \$75 to \$110. The total charge for a minor passport book (age 16 and under), including the application fee, security surcharge and execution fee, will increase from \$85 to \$105.

Didn't you just recently increase the passport application fee?

The previous update of the Schedule of Fees was in 2005. At that time, the passport application fee was lowered. Passport application fees were raised slightly in February 2008, based on the need to add passport processing capability ahead of the implementation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, but those increases were based on estimates. The cost of service study completed in June 2009 captures those costs more accurately.

What is the actual cost of processing passport applications?

The June 2009 study estimated that the actual cost of processing first-time passport applications for both adults and minors is \$103.49, including border security costs covered by the passport book security surcharge. Because a minor passport book has a validity of just five years, in contrast with the ten-year validity period of an adult passport book, the Department has decided to leave the minor passport book application fee at \$40, and allocate the remainder of the cost of processing minor passport book applications to the adult passport book

application fee. The Department is raising the security surcharge for both adult and minor passports from \$20 to \$40 to cover the costs of increased border security, which include enhanced biometric features in the document.

Why is the government charging me such a high fee to add passport pages, something previously provided for free?

The cost of service study found that adding visa pages to an existing passport book requires nearly the same resources as producing a new passport book. The study found that the cost of producing the pages, placing them in the book in a secure manner by trained personnel, and completing the required security checks costs the U.S. Government \$82.48. The Department will charge \$82 for this service. Please note that frequent travelers renewing their passports can request a 52-page passport book at no additional cost, potentially saving them from the additional cost of visa pages.

Why did the application fee for a passport card go up?

The cost of service study projected that the outlay of processing first-time applications for adult and minor passport cards in Fiscal Year 2010 will be \$77.59. The passport card is intended to be a substantially less expensive document than the passport book for the convenience of citizens who live close to land borders and cross back and forth frequently. Therefore, the Department has decided to raise the adult passport card application fee from \$20 to just \$30, and the child passport card application fee from \$10 to just \$15.

You just implemented WHTI, which requires me to have a passport, and now are raising the fees I have to pay?

Independent of the new travel regulations, the Department of State's cost of producing passport books and passport cards has increased. Our new fees reflect the cost of providing passport services to the American public.

Has the passport application execution/acceptance fee now increased?

No, the passport application execution/acceptance fee will remain the same, \$25.

If the passport fees increased, why didn't the passport application execution/acceptance fee increase?

The Department of State reviewed the cost factors for the execution of passport applications separately from the application fee. In order to determine the appropriate execution fee, and since postal acceptance facilities comprise the majority of our acceptance facility network, Department officials consulted with the United States Postal Service. We agreed to charge a \$25 acceptance/execution fee that would appropriately recover costs and ensure that our acceptance facilities can continue to provide passport acceptance service to our customers.

Why was the file search fee increased?

The Department is raising the fee for file searches from \$60 to \$150 based on the cost of providing the service. Applicants can avoid paying this fee by providing adequate citizenship documentation when applying for a passport rather than requesting an expensive, time-intensive file search.

How can I get more information about passport fees?

Information about passport fees, as well as how and where to apply for a U.S. passport book or card, can be found on the Department of State's web site at travel.state.gov.

OCS FEES

Why does it cost so much money for me to renounce my U.S. citizenship?

Renouncing one's U.S. citizenship is a significant step that requires thorough and careful attention. We take seriously our responsibilities for ensuring that people know the consequences of their decision and that each case is properly handled. As a result, the adjudication of renunciation cases is very costly per case. The new fee of \$450 helps cover those costs.

Did the fee also change for a Report of Birth Abroad of a Citizen of the United States?

Yes. The fee will increase from \$65 to \$100, which is still less than the cost indicated by the cost of service study. We opted not to raise it as

high as actual cost so as not to discourage U.S. citizen parents seeking to document their children. It is in the national interest that U.S. citizen parents document the citizenship of their children at birth and, because most parents also apply for a passport at the same time, a fee greater than \$100 would be a disincentive.

Are you raising the fees for notarial services?

Yes, providing notarial services has increased from \$30 to \$50 for the first service; each additional seal has increased from \$20 to \$50. Also, providing a seal and certification of deposits has increased from \$70 to \$415.

IV FEES

Are immigrant visa (IV) fees being increased?

Yes. The Department is increasing most immigrant visa (IV) processing fees based on results of the cost of service study and also establishing multiple fees. IV processing fees were last increased in 2005, to \$355 per applicant. Under the new schedule of fees, IV applicants will pay: \$330 for immediate relative and family preference cases; \$720 for employment-based cases; and \$305 for other categories (including Diversity Visa, SE category special immigrant, and self-petitioner cases). (Special immigrants under Section 1244 of the Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 and Section 602(b) of the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009 remain fee-exempt.) The IV security surcharge, paid by all non-fee-exempt applicants, will increase from \$45 to \$74. The Diversity Visa (DV) surcharge will increase from \$375 to \$440. The fee for Affidavit of Support (I-864) Review will increase from \$70 to \$88. The fee for determining Returning Resident Status will decrease from \$400 to \$380.

When do the new IV processing fees go into effect?

The new fees will take effect on July 13, 2010. IV applicants must start paying the new processing fees as of that date. Applicants who receive bills from the National Visa Center (NVC) dated after July 13 must pay the new processing fees.

What if I already paid all IV fees applicable to my case?

Fees paid at U.S. Embassies and Consulates or to NVC prior to the publication of the final rule are considered paid in full at the current rate, and these applicants will not be required to pay additional fees to cover the difference between the current and new fees. Applicants already billed by NVC prior to the publication of the final rule will only pay the fees billed, regardless of whether they pay before or after the new fees are implemented.

What if I receive a bill from NVC after the new IV fees go into effect on a certain date, but it is prior to that date?

Fees billed by NVC prior to July 13, 2010 will be considered paid in full at the current rates, and these applicants will not be billed at a later date for additional fees to cover the difference between the current and new fee rates, regardless of when they pay.

Are there any exceptions?

Yes. If applicants paid their visa application processing fees before March 2005, they will be required to pay the security surcharge.